

Villanova, PA – Congressman Joe Sestak (PA-07) joined representatives from Security on Campus, a King of Prussia organization with a mission to combat violence on college campuses, and Villanova University officials to announce the designation of September as National Campus Safety Awareness Month (NCSAM). The Congressman presented Security on Campus co-founder Constance Clery with a copy of a resolution (H. Res. 1288) that he introduced and secured passage for in the House to establish NCSAM. Howard and Constance Clery created Security on Campus after their daughter, Jeanne, was raped and murdered as a student at Lehigh University. The Congressman spoke to the Villanova community about the importance of the resolution and further steps that need to be taken to prevent campus violence, as it has been documented that no fewer than 37 homicides, 8,114 forcible-sex offenses, 8,923 aggravated assaults, and 3,071 cases of arson occurred on campuses from 2004 to 2006. —

“National Campus Safety Awareness Month encourages college officials to pay closer attention to growing instances of crime and violence and I am proud to have partnered with Ms. Clery and Security on Campus,” said Congressman Sestak. “It is crucial that we open a dialogue between students, college personnel and local law enforcement agencies to ensure the security of our educational institutions. Campuses, like any other community, have to deal with crime. The awareness that this resolution helps to generate better equips every member of the community to protect themselves and prevent crime.”

The House of Representatives voted unanimously in favor of the measure, which builds on the Congressman’s work to reduce violence through events in the District – where he has hosted an Anti-Violence Summit as well as education summits that have addressed the issue of ways to reduce violence – and through legislation in Washington, where he has advocated for better reporting of incidents in schools. As part of the process of producing this resolution, the Congressman met with representatives from Security on Campus Inc. The Clerys and staff have worked tirelessly to improve campus safety and security throughout the country, including working to pass six federal laws dealing with college campus safety- most notably, the Jeanne Clery Disclosure of Campus Security Policy and Campus Crimes Statistics Act.

Currently, in accordance with the Jeanne Clery Act, the nation’s colleges and universities are required to publish and distribute an Annual Campus Security Report, maintain a public log of all crimes reported to them and provide warnings of crimes that represent a threat to the security of students and employees. From these reports, more than 10,000 instances of violent crime have been revealed. Meanwhile, the National Advisory Council on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism notes that each year 1,700 college students between the ages of 18 and 24 die from unintentional alcohol related injuries, including motor vehicle crashes. Additionally, between one

fifth and one quarter of female undergraduates will be the victim of a completed or attempted rape, usually by someone they know, during their college careers; however, fewer than five percent of these incidents are reported to the police, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

Congressman Sestak's efforts in this area have extended to secondary schools, as he has made violence one of the themes of a field hearing on No Child Left Behind held at Radnor High School. The hearing was attended by Dale Kildee, Chairman on Early Childhood, Elementary and Secondary Education. During the proceedings, Radnor Middle School Principal Anthony Stevenson testified about the need to have a "positive and welcoming school climate" to help students "avoid high risk behaviors like substance abuse and violence."

The Congressman has used the comments he has heard in the District to try to make practical legislation in Washington, where he has worked on a related amendment to the No Child Left Behind Act. Since an Education Committee hearing on dropout prevention when Members questioned panel witnesses on the problem of underreporting of student violence and crime, Congressman Sestak has advocated to include in the bill standard reporting metrics that would ensure that the federal government can collect appropriate data to effect policies that improve school safety. Part of the problem relates to the "persistently dangerous" school label under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, as school administrators fear backlash from parents, the community, and media. For example, during the 2003-04 school year, only 26 of the nation's 91,000 public schools were labeled "persistently dangerous." Forty-seven states and the District of Columbia reported that they were home to not a single unsafe school.

"We must make certain that school administrators operate in conditions under which they are comfortable and fully disclose violent acts," said Congressman Sestak. "Until we can correctly define the problems that we have both at secondary and post-secondary schools, it will be extremely difficult to combat violence effectively."

Earlier this year, the Congressman's Anti-Violence Summit featured panels of local experts, law enforcement officers, and religious and community leaders who discussed the role of violence in our community and how interfaith and community organizations can partner with elected officials to reduce it. Specifically, panelists and audience members mentioned ways to steer youth away from activities and groups that can lead to involvement in illegal activities.

"I fully recognize that violence and crime know no boundaries," said Congressman Sestak in

discussing the critical need to bring together a variety of leaders to address the issue. “We need the full force of our citizens, community organizations, religious leaders and elected officials as we seek pragmatic solutions to violence and its causes.”

*Born and raised in Delaware County, former 3-star Admiral Joe Sestak served in the Navy for 31 years and now serves as the Representative from the 7th District of Pennsylvania. He led a series of operational commands at sea, including Commander of an aircraft carrier battle group of 30 U.S. and allied ships with over 15,000 sailors and 100 aircraft that conducted operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. After 9/11, Joe was the first Director of “Deep Blue,” the Navy’s anti-terrorism unit that established strategic and operations policies for the “Global War on Terrorism.” He served as President Clinton’s Director for Defense Policy at the National Security Council in the White House, and holds a Ph.D. in Political Economy and Government from Harvard University. According to the office of the House Historian, Joe is the highest-ranking former military officer ever elected to the Congress.*

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